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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2154
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1541
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001454

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: KYRGYZ REFUGEE REGIME REMAINS ON EDGE

REF: A. BISHKEK 1159
[1](#)B. BISHKEK 1226
[1](#)C. 05 TASHKENT 1369
[1](#)D. BISHKEK 1409

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Classified By: Charge Lee Litzenberger, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On October 12 and 13, visiting PRM Officer and Poloff met with Kyrgyz Government officials, international organization representatives, and NGOs in Bishkek and Osh to discuss the refugee situation in Kyrgyzstan. Following recent extraditions and reported abductions (refs a and b), Embassy contacts have charged that Kyrgyzstan's once exemplary refugee regime is eroding. Although UNHCR has been able to work cooperatively with its Kyrgyz counterparts to resettle numerous Uzbek asylum seekers to third countries, the safety of those currently residing in Kyrgyzstan has not been assured. And if in the future there is another flow of asylum seekers from Uzbekistan, governmental and nongovernmental actors alike do not believe that Kyrgyzstan is prepared to handle them effectively. Without policies in place to ensure the safety of the approximately eighty asylum seekers registered in Kyrgyzstan, or the will to grant refugee status to Uzbek nationals, the refugee situation in Kyrgyzstan, according to experts in the field, will continue to deteriorate. END SUMMARY.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE AN ASYLUM SEEKER

[1](#)2. (C) During two days of discussions with Kyrgyz Government (GOKG) officials, international organization representatives, and NGOs on October 12 and 13 in Bishkek and Osh, visiting PRM Officer and Poloff were told that UNHCR has been able to establish cooperative relations with GOKG authorities. Following the May 2005 Andijon uprising (ref c), UNHCR convinced the GOKG to grant asylum seeker status to the 500 Uzbek nationals who crossed the border in Kyrgyzstan. As UNHCR Country Representative Carlos Zaccagnini informed Poloff, the Kyrgyz have thus far refused to grant refugee status to Uzbek citizens for fear of political reprisal. Given Kyrgyzstan's reliance upon cheap Uzbek gas, said

Zaccagnini, the GOKG has made the strategic decision to either extradite Uzbeks deemed to be wanted criminals or allow UNHCR to resettle them to other countries. While resettlement has been mildly successful, some have claimed that this arrangement is only a temporary solution that does not address the long-term needs of those who choose to remain in Kyrgyzstan indefinitely.

13. (C) Director of the Adilet Legal Clinic (which provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers throughout the country) Cholpon Jakupova said that many have suffered due to UNHCR's inability to persuade the GOKG to grant refugee status to the dozens of Uzbek nationals who have crossed the border seeking refuge since the events in Andijon. Because resettlement involves splitting families and communities, charged Jakupova, a number of those who have been resettled to third countries, including the United States, have chosen to return to certain repression in Uzbekistan. Jakupova said that a decision to move back to Uzbekistan permanently would not have to be made if the resettled asylum seekers were able to remain in Kyrgyzstan, in close proximity to their families in Uzbekistan and near to the porous border.

14. (C) Echoing Jakupova's sentiments, Mulusew Mamo, Head of UNHCR's Field Office in Osh, said that Uzbek asylum seekers living in and around Osh have successfully taken advantage of the large Uzbek community in southern Kyrgyzstan to find jobs, housing, and a strong support network. Those living abroad, including those who felt compelled to move farther away from the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border to avoid the possibility of being abducted by the Uzbek security services, have not only found it difficult to cope but have also decided to return to their "mahallah," or communities, in Uzbekistan. Both Jakupova and Mamo agreed separately that a policy needed to

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be in place to enable Uzbek asylum seekers to obtain refugee status in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, security assurances must be provided, said Jakupova, Mamo, and Tursenbek Akun, Chairman of the President's Human Rights Commission, to those asylum seekers currently living in Kyrgyzstan. Zlatko Zigic, International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Chief of Mission, warned separately that without those assurances, the possibility that other Uzbek nationals could be abducted from their Kyrgyz homes remains ever-present.

15. (C) Under the agreement UNHCR-brokered with the GOKG's State Committee for Migration and Employment (State Committee), family reunifications with resettled asylum seekers have increased steadily. As with the case of Yogdoroy Yuldasheva (ref d), other Uzbek asylum seekers have sought UNHCR's assistance to reunite family members who have managed to cross the border into Kyrgyzstan with their resettled kin outside of Kyrgyzstan. (Note: During the meeting with Mulusew Mamo, Poloff was informed that Yuldasheva's daughter, Gulmira Maksudova, has moved temporarily to Bishkek, with her infant daughter, to be reunited with Maksudova's husband in Dusseldorf as soon as her German visa is issued. Mamo also confirmed that Yuldasheva will, indeed, be moving back to Andijon once the Uzbek Embassy in Washington grants entry status to Yuldasheva and more than fifty other resettled Uzbeks currently living in Boise, Idaho. Separately, Carlos Zaccagnini speculated that a three-way deal was struck between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz governments and Yuldasheva, enabling Gulmira Maksudova to be released by the Kyrgyz once Yuldasheva promised to return to Uzbekistan and convince the rest of Boise group to do the same. End note.)

16. (C) According to UNHCR and IOM, other family reunifications have occurred recently, prompting more resettled Uzbeks throughout the world to seek guidance and assistance from UNHCR as they attempt to reunite with their Uzbek relatives in third countries. Under UNHCR's deal with the GOKG, the Kyrgyz have allowed such reunifications to take

place unhindered, thus far. UNHCR, IOM, and Adilet were not certain that the GOKG's cooperation could be sustained, however, if the number of Uzbek asylum seekers seeking reunification with resettled family members increases. To date, according to Zaccagnini, the Kyrgyz have essentially "looked the other way," but may not be willing or able to continue doing so if there is a massive influx of Uzbeks or if such reunifications damage their warming relations with Uzbekistan. This has created further anxieties for UNHCR and the State Committee, said Mulusew Mamo.

COMMENT: THE BREAKING POINT

17. (C) UNHCR and the State Committee have, thus far, worked cooperatively to ensure that Uzbek nationals seeking refuge in third countries obtain the assistance needed to see their cases through. The current arrangement may not be sustainable, however, if additional asylum seekers cross the border in search of resettlement to third countries, reunification with resettled family members, or permanent refugee status in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, given that Kyrgyzstan has not granted refugee status to a single Uzbek national in at least the past year, it may be difficult for UNHCR to convince the GOKG to do otherwise. Moreover, as Kyrgyzstan's relations with Uzbekistan continue to warm, it may be equally as difficult to obtain security assurances from the GOKG for those asylum seekers currently living in Kyrgyzstan that are wanted by the Uzbek Government on criminal charges.

LITZENBERGER